

## Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A method of providing improved security for systems or files accessible by password data entry comprising the steps of:
- 5 determining a secure password;
- providing a system or file;
- providing the secure password to a password database independent of the system and the file for storage therein in association with a security level;
- 10 providing the secure password to a password sub-system for securing the determined system or file;
- determining a user authorisation method having an associated security level sufficient for accessing the secure password;
- authorising an individual according to the secure authorisation method;
- 15 when the individual is authorised, retrieving the secure password from the database and automatically providing the secure password to the system or file password subsystem for accessing the system or file wherein the system or file is accessible by manually entering the secure password to the password sub-system.
- 20 2. A method of providing improved security for systems or files accessible by password data entry as defined in claim 1 wherein the step of determining the secure password comprises the step of automatically determining the secure password.
3. A method of providing improved security for systems or files accessible by password data entry as defined in claim 2 wherein the determined secure password is secret and
- 25 remains inaccessible to users of the system.
4. A method of providing improved security for systems or files accessible by password data entry as defined in claim 1 wherein the password database comprises a key data file.

30

5. A method of providing improved security for systems or files accessible by password data entry as defined in claim 4 wherein the password database is stored within a portable storage medium.

5 6. A method of providing improved security for systems or files accessible by password data entry as defined in claim 1 wherein the step of determining the secure password comprises the steps of manually providing the secure password to a password entry subsystem; and recording the password during entry.

10 7. A method of providing improved security for systems or files accessible by password data entry as defined in claim 1 wherein the password is stored in association with data indicative of the protected file.

15 8. A method of providing improved security for systems or files accessible by password data entry as defined in claim 1 wherein the protected file is stored in association with data indicative of the password.

19850324 095547 033506

20 9. A method of providing improved security for files accessible by password data entry comprising the steps of:  
selecting a secured data file;  
providing a password database;  
automatically determining a secure password identifier associated with the secured data file;  
determining a user authorisation method having an associated security level sufficient for  
25 accessing the secure password;  
authorising an individual according to the secure authorisation method;  
when the individual is authorised, retrieving the secure password from the database and  
automatically providing the secure password to the selected secured file password entry  
subsystem.

10. A method of providing improved security for files accessible by password data entry as defined in claim 9 wherein the password database comprises a plurality of passwords and wherein the step of determining a secure password identifier comprises the step of determining a password from the plurality of passwords for use in accessing data within  
5 the secured data file.

11. A method of changing a first password for securing files accessible by password data entry comprising the steps of:

determining a plurality of files secured with a first password;

10 providing a second other password for securing the plurality of files;

for each file secured with the first password, accessing the file with the first password and securing the file with the second other password;

storing the second other password in the password database.

12. A method of changing a first password for securing files accessible by password data entry as defined in claim 11 comprising the step of: archiving the first password for use in  
15 accessing archival files secured with the first password.

13. A method of changing a first password for securing files accessible by password data entry as defined in claim 11 comprising the step of authorising an individual requesting a  
20 change of the first password prior to changing the first password.

14. A method of changing a first password for securing files accessible by password data entry as defined in claim 13 wherein the step of authorising the individual requesting the  
25 change comprises the steps of:

determining a user authorisation method having an associated security level sufficient for accessing the secure password; and,

authorising an individual according to the secure authorisation method.

15. A method of changing a first password for securing files accessible by password data entry as defined in claim 11 wherein the step of determining a plurality of files secured  
30

with the first password comprises the step of determining from the password database, files associated with the first password.

16. A method of changing a first password for securing files accessible by password data  
5 entry as defined in claim 15 wherein those files associated with the first password are identified because they are identified by an identifier associated with the first password.

17. A method of changing a first password for securing files accessible by password data  
10 entry as defined in claim 11 wherein the step of determining a plurality of files secured with the first password comprises the step of determining from accessible files, those files associated with the first password.

18. A method of changing a first password for securing files accessible by password data  
15 entry as defined in claim 11 wherein the step of providing a second other password includes the step of automatically generating the second other password.

19. A method of changing a first password for securing files accessible by password data entry as defined in claim 18 wherein the method is automatically repeated at intervals.

20. A method of changing a first password for securing files accessible by password data  
20 entry as defined in claim 19 wherein the method is automatically repeated upon detection of a breach of a password and upon expiry of a password.